Die Lunæ, 1. *Feb.* 1696.

IT is Ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Aſſembled, that the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Lord Biſhop of *Coventry* and *Lichfield*, for his Sermon Preach'd on the 30*th* of *January* laſt before this Houſe, in the Abbey-Church at *Weſtminſter*; and he is hereby deſired to Print and Publiſh the ſame.

Matth. Johnſon, Cler. Parl.

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A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

Houſe of LORDS,

AT THE

Abbey-Church of St. *Peter's-Weſtminſter*;

ON

Saturday the 30*th* of *January*, 169$\frac{6}{7}$.

Being the Anniverſary of the Death of King *CHARLES* I. of Glorious Memory.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

WILLIAM, Lord Biſhop of *Coventry* and *Lichfield*; Lord Almoner to His Majeſty.

LONDON, Printed for *John Everingham*, at the *Star* in *Ludgate-ſtreet*, near the Weſt End of St. *Pauls*, 1697.

The Bishop of *Coventry* and *Lichfield*'s

SERMON

Preach'd before the

House of LORDS.

A

SERMON

Preached before

The Houſe of LORDS,

January the XXX*th*, $169\frac{6}{7}$.

ZECH. VII. 5.

Speak unto all the People of the Land, and unto the Prieſts, ſaying, When ye Faſted and Mourned in the fifth and ſeventh Month, even thoſe ſeventy years, did you at all Faſt unto me, even to me?

FOR the better underſtanding of theſe Words, it will be neceſſary to Conſider the Occaſion of them, which may be gathered from the three firſt Verſes of this Chapter.

God's People the *Jews*, within a few years before, had been Captives together at *Babylon*, and upon the taking of that City by *Cyrus* King of *Perſia*, part of them, even as many as pleaſed, were returned with his Leave and Favour to *Jeruſalem*; and there, upon the encouragement that he gave them, had begun to Rebuild their Temple, that was deſtroyed by King *Nebucadnezzar*. But beſides thoſe that were returned to *Jeruſalem*, there

were others of them that remained yet at *Babylon*; I ſuppoſe chiefly ſuch as had Eſtates there; tho' ſome of them might ſtay there upon other Occaſions. Now after ſome twenty years, the Building of the Temple, which had been ſo long diſcontinued, being now carried on amain, and near finiſhed, ſome Queſtions aroſe among thoſe *Jews* at *Babylon*, whether they ſhould ſtill continue all thoſe Faſts which had been hitherto obſerved by their whole Nation.

The Queſtion was more particularly concerning thoſe Faſts of the Months *Ab* and *Tiſri*, the fifth Month and ſeventh Month of their year; that of the fifth Month being for the Deſtruction of the Temple, that of the ſeventh Month, for the ſlaughter of *Gedalia*, and thoſe others of the Remnant that ſtaid with him in *Judea* after the Captivity. They obſerved two other Faſts, namely of the fourth Month, and of the tenth Month, whereof one was for the beginning of the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, and the other was for the Burning of that City. Theſe laſt they thought they had Reaſon to continue, becauſe the City of *Jeruſalem* was not yet built. But for thoſe two Faſts of the fifth and ſeventh Month, they thought now that the Occaſion was ceas'd, and therefore the Faſts ſhould ceaſe alſo. But they were not ſo ſure of this, but that they thought beſt to ſend to *Jeruſalem* for a Reſolution of their doubt. There was the High-Prieſt, that was their ordinary Guide; and beſides, at this time, there were Prophets, *Haggai*, and *Zechary*, that had Divinc Inſpiration. Theſe they ſought to eſpecially, and by one of them, the Prophet *Zechary*, they had this Anſwer from God. *Speak to all the People of the Land*, &c.

This is but an Introduction to that Leſſon from God, which follows in the ninth Verſe, *Execute Judgment.*

Judgment, &c. From which words, conſider'd together with theſe in my Text, the meaning of it appears to be plainly, as if he had ſaid, Conſider what kind of Faſt it hath been, that you have now obſerved for ſo many years, for theſe ſeventy years that have paſt ſince the deſtruction of the Temple, and ſince the ſlaughter of *Gedalia.* Tho' you have all this while kept theſe Faſts, and did well in it, was it well to keep them ſo as you have done? Your Faſting hath been no more *to me,* than your eating and drinking hath been; *when you did eat, and when you did drink, was is not to your ſelves?* Verſe 6. even ſo was your Faſting likewiſe, it was to your ſelves, and uot to me; for all the while you have liv'd at your own rate, without any change for the better. In plain words, God takes nothing for a Religious Faſt, but that which is joyned with a real Reformation; that which leads to a Reformation of Life, and that which ends in ſuch a Reformation; ſuch a Faſt God accepts, and no other. Of any other Faſt he ſays, *who required this at your hands? Eſa.* I. 12. And ſo in this Text, *did you Faſt to me, even to me?*

In the words thus explained, there are ſeveral things to be obſerved. As particularly,

1. That it hath been the way of God's People to Appoint and Obſerve Days of Faſting for any Publick Calamity.

2. That where the Calamity was ſuch, as drew great and heavy Conſequences after it, they continued their Faſting year after year, for many years.

3. That thoſe Faſts are acceptable to God, and no other than thoſe, which produce a real Reformation.

Firſt, It is clear from this Text, and from many others, that in the Ancient Church of God, they appointed

pointed days of Faſting and Mourning, to humble their Souls before God, upon any publick Calamity. It appears to have been the will of God that they ſhould make ſuch Appointments on ſuch Occaſions, *Joel* II. 12. God calleth them to this, as a means for averting of his Judgments. *Turn ye unto me with all your hearts, and with Faſting, and Weeping, and Mourning*, &c.

When without a call from God, Men have made ſuch appointments for themſelves, it appears that God hath accepted their good will in ſo doing. So gracious was he, even to the *Ninevites*, *Jonah* III. 10. and therefore we cannot doubt he would accept the like Faſts of his own People. From this Inſtance of the *Ninevite's* Faſt, it farther appears that this was no *Jewiſh* Rite; for they of *Nineve* had none but the Natural Religion, and whatſoever that teaches, is a Law to us *Chriſtians*, as well as to *Jews* or *Heathens*.

Secondly, It is clear from this Text, that for ſuch a Publick Calamity, as draws a train of woful Conſequences after it; as the firſt ſtroak requires a Publick Humiliation; ſo it may be very fit to repeat that Humiliation every year, as long as any of thoſe Conſequences endure. The burning of the Temple, and the deſtruction of that poor Remnant of God's People, were ſuch publick Calamities, as deſerv'd to be remembred, in a Faſt, when the year came about; and they did ſo remember thoſe things, in the Months in which they happened; the fifth Month, and the ſeventh Month, mentioned in my Text. But was that all? No, as oft as thoſe Months returned (which could not be, without minding them of thoſe things which hapned

happened in thoſe Months;) ſo oft they repeated thoſe Faſts. And thus they did every Year, for Seventy Years together, in Memory of thoſe great Calamities.

Thus in former Times, before the *Babylonian* Captivity, when God's People had loſt the beſt King that ever they had, King *Joſias*, the only Man that ſtood between them and the heavy judgments of God; for his Death, they had a Faſt, which they continued till the Captivity; and afterwards, for no leſs than a Hundred and Fifty Years: We know not how much longer; but we know it was above an Hundred and Fifty Years after, that *Ezra* writ the Second Book of *Chronicles* where *Chap* XXXV. 25. that Writer ſaith, *they continue it to this Day*; that is, till the Time of his Writing that Hiſtory.

But what is an Hundred and Fifty Years, to the continuance of theſe Faſts in my Text? The Faſt of the Fifth Month and the Seventh, and alſo thoſe of the Fourth and of the Tenth Month, all which you read of together, here *Chap.* VIII. 19. All theſe Faſts continued in the *Jewiſh* Church, till the Laſt Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; which was near Six Hundred Years after.

So long, God accepted what they did in obſerving them; as we may reaſonably judge: Becauſe, as we are ſure they obſerved thoſe Faſts in Chriſt's Time; for they do ſo ſtill to this Day; ſo we ſee Chriſt did not reprove them for theſe Faſts; as he did for all the *Jewiſh* Corruptions and Superſtitions; nor did they ever Tax him for breaking thoſe Faſts, and therefore we have no reaſon to doubt but that he kept thoſe Faſts with them. But after his Death, they kept them ſtill, till the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*,

as we gather from *Josephus*; and all this Time, the Apostles of Christ still kept these Fasts with them.

After the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, they were no more the People of God: And therefore it matters not much what they did, as to any Authority we can draw from it; but as to matter of History, we know that for these Sixteen Hundred Years since they are continued still in that Nation. And no doubt they will continue, still, in the Observation of these Fasts; till their gathering again after their Conversion to Christ. Then it will be fulfilled, which we read in the Eighth *Chap.* of this Prophecy. Where speaking of the Conversion of the *Jews* in the time of the *Messias*, the Prophet tells them *Ver.* 19. beforementioned; *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah, joy and gladness, and chearful feasts.* He shews plainly, that this shall be after the Conversion of the *Jews*, by what follows in the Two Last Verses of that Chapter.

What I have said may give some satisfaction to them that have a Curiosity to know how long these Fasts here mentioned were to continue. But I confess that was beside my present intention. I intended only this, to shew that, in all Ages, it hath been the Practice of God's Church, to keep Yearly Days of fasting upon such sad occasions; and to continue those Fasts from Age to Age if occasion required.

Which being considered, there needs no other Answer be given to them that ask a reason of our keeping this Yearly Solemnity. I do not speak

ſpeak now, of them that are ſo wicked to juſtify the King's Murther; but of them that have the ſame ſenſe of it that we have: and yet, becauſe they do not love Faſting; or whatever the reaſon may be; they would not have the Memory of it, kept up in this manner. They ſay, What need is there of this for a thing that was done ſo long ago? It is now Forty Eight Years ſince that Bleſſed King was put to Death. And ſince that time, have we not ſeen the Reſtauration of the Royal Family? Was not our Faſt, Then, turned literally into Feſtival? And do we not keep that Feſtival ever ſince? They think much to be obliged to this Feſtival ſo long after; but much more to Keep a Faſt for that which, as to them, ſeems to be quite worn out of Memory.

Now for Men that Talk at this rate, if they are Men of no Conſcience, ſuch are not to be ſatisfied. But for them that pretend to tender Conſciences, they, if they are truly ſuch, may and will be ſatisfied out of Scripture. In my Text they ſee the People of God, in Scripture-times, when they had kept Four ſuch Faſts every Year, for Seventy Years together; that is a great deal more than Forty Eight; yet they were not weary of keeping them. They had no Objection againſt Two of them; but for other Two of thoſe Faſts, they had an Objection againſt them, much like one of thoſe that I have now mentioned; Their Faſt for the Deſtruction of the Temple, and that for the Unpeopling of the Land. Now, both theſe occaſions were ceas'd. The Temple was now Rebuilding, and the People was returned from Captivity. Now, they had reaſon to think both theſe Faſts might be turned into Feſtivals; at leaſt thoſe Two

Faſts, they might think, were to be no longer continued. And that was the reaſon of their ſending to know the Will of God by his Prophets.

But what was the Will of God concerning this matter? Was it, that they ſhould keep theſe Faſts no longer? No. But that they ſhould keep them better; better, then they had done all this while. Had they kept them fifty Years, as they ought to have done; (there was juſt fifty Years from the Deſtruction of the Temple, till *Cyrus* his Reign,) then, in the Second Year of *Cyrus* there had been an end of their faſting. For there was an end of the Seventy Years, from the 4th of *Jehoiakim*, the time that God had prefixed for the *Babylonian* Captivity. In the Firſt Year of *Cyrus* they returned from the Captivity; and in the Second the foundation of the Temple was laid. But then, they were ſo little reformed by all their faſting; that, for their Sins, the Building was ſtopt the next Year, as you may ſee in the 4th of *Ezra*, and the 10th *Chapter* of *Daniel*. The ſtop was near Twenty Years; in all which time they faſted on, and were never the better. They were content, as *Haggai* complains of them, that God's Houſe ſhould lie waſte, while their own Houſes were in Building, *Hag.* 1. 2, 4, 9. They had not a Zeal for Religion; No, nor had they any Juſtice, nor Charity for one another. They were every one ſcraping for himſelf what he could get. This was it that *Haggai* and *Zechariah* the Prophets then living both Preached and Writ to reprove. And while it was thus with God's People, though they kept their Faſts all this while, God asks them, For whoſe pleaſure, and

to

to whoſe ſervice they did it; *have you faſted and mourned theſe ſeventy years to me, even unto me?*

By his Queſtion, Was it to me that you faſted? His meaning is, it was not to me. Your Faſt was not ſuch as I require and approve.

That which God requires and accepts and approves, is deſcribed in the 9th and 10th Verſes of this *Chapter*, in theſe words; *Execute true judgment; Show mercy and compaſſion every man to his brother; oppreſs not the widow, the fatherleſs, the ſtranger and the poor; Let none of you imagine evil againſt his brother in his heart.* Theſe and ſuch like Duties he requires, which, being all ſummed up together, amount to a National Reformation. A Publick National Reformation, is that which makes a Faſt acceptable to God.

This is the Third thing I have obſerved in my Text.

As to God's People here ſpoken of, it is granted that they Faſted and Mourned; there was no want of that. They rather over-did it that way. Where was the fault then? God tells them, it hath not been *to me, even to me.*

If they would have God accept of their Faſts, they muſt do what God intended them for; even all that he deſcribes in Ver. 9th and 10th of this *Chapter*, and all other things of that kind, which I ſum up in the Word *Reformation.*

To Diſcourſe of this matter as it deſerves, would require more time than you will willingly ſpare me; I ſhall therefore ſhew you as briefly as I can, theſe Three things, which are all that are neceſſary at this time.

1. What kind of Faſting and Mourning it was, that they uſed in the *Jewiſh* Church. 2. What

2. What the reaſon was that God would not accept it, would not take it as performed to himſelf.

3. What it was that he would have accepted of them, and will yet accept of us Chriſtians.

1. For their Faſting and Mourning, it was ſuch as conſiſted all in Bodily Acts: Such as one might perform to the full, and yet his Soul might be never the better for them. But they were Acts of great ſeverity too, which ſhewed that they were much in earneſt that performed them.

Their faſting was, not only an abſtaining from ſuch and ſuch Meats and Drinks, as the manner is with ſome Chriſtians, that never eat and drink more deliciouſly than on ſuch days. But theirs was a total Abſtinence, eſpecially on ſome of their Faſts, from all kind of ſuſtenance whatever. They held themſelves to it with all rigour imaginable. They impoſed it not only on themſelves, but on every living Creature about them. Not only Men and Women, but even the ſucking Children; not only Humane Creatures, but the very Beaſts, the Herds, and the Flocks; all were kept from Meat and Drink, as if God would have been moved by their Mortification.

Perhaps the *Ninevites* might think ſo, when they made their Beaſts keep their Faſts with them *Jonah* VII. 7. But the *Jews* made their ſucking Children Faſt, even by God's Preſcription *Joel* II. 6. Not that God himſelf could be moved; but their Parents might, by hearing the Cries of thoſe innocent Creatures, to Cry alſo themſelves, the more earneſtly, in bewailing their Sins before God.

2. Then for their Mourning, beſides their Vocal Cries, they obſerved alſo all thoſe Rites, which in thoſe

those Eastern Countries they used in their bittereſt Afflictions.

I will name you those Rites which are mentioned in Scripture, that you may see how severely they punished themselves with them: Such as rending of their Cloaths, putting Sackcloth on their flesh, girding it close to their Body; shaving themselves into Baldness, sprinkling Ashes upon their Heads, and so hanging them down, and sitting desolate; beating their Breasts, and smiting on the Thigh; weeping Rivers of Tears, if they were so well stored; or instead of it, pouring out Water before the Lord.

And when they had tired themselves with these things, to make their Rest as unpleasant as their Labour, their way was, to spread Sackcloth on the ground, which they strowed with Dust and Ashes, and there they laid themselves down for all Night; sometimes for several Nights together; sleeping, only when they could wake no longer.

A whole Day and Night, or whole Days and Nights together, thus spent in Fasting and Mourning, in all these dolorous Circumstances; one would think might have 'pass'd, for sufficient proof of sincere *Mortification*.

And so it might in the Judgment of Men, that see only the outsides of Persons and things. But God that sees the Heart, saw through all this, into a world of Cheat and Hypocrisy. He saw that many that Fasted and Mourned in this manner, did really intend it only for Men and not for God. For many of them, *God was not in all their thoughts*; but Men they thought would see them, and believe them, and be so much the easier Prey to them.

As

As for thoſe that did think of God, and had a ſenſe of Religion, but did not live under the power of it; they could not but look upon God as being angry with them for their Sins; and therefore, being in fear of his diſpleaſure, they took this to be the eaſieſt way to pacify him. It is certainly much eaſier for a Wicked Man, for a day or two, now and then, to undergo the ſevereſt Penance, then to bring himſelf to live conſtantly in a courſe of Obedience to God. And therefore they that kept their faſts, as you have heard, they did as it were *commute*; and choſe to give God, that Penance on their Faſt-Days, rather than the Obedience of their whole Lives.

They that were not ſo wiſe to think of this, yet did the ſame thing, without thinking; perhaps firſt, for company with the others, to do like their Brethren; and afterwards out of cuſtom, to do ſtill as they uſed to do.

This ſeems to have been the general way of that People, for which God ſeverely expoſtulates with them, in ſeveral places of Scripture; but eſpecially in *Iſa.* LVIII. from *v.* 3. to *v.* 9. I leave them that are diſpoſed, to look the Place. It comes to this in ſhort, that their Faſting and Mourning, was all ſuch as I have deſcribed. A meer Carnal Diſcipline, that had no inward Goodneſs in it ſelf, nor made them ever the better, as they uſed it. And therefore it ſignified nothing to God's deſign, of bringing Men to be like him in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs of Life. Whether any Faſting can conduce to this purpoſe, and what it is; that is the laſt thing to be Conſidered.

That

That there is a Fasting to God, tho' not such as they used, this was granted to the Jews in many Texts, And we that are taught to Worship God *in Spirit and in Truth*, and therefore have no reason to think our selves obliged to those Rigours that were necessary for that Carnal and Ignorant People; yet we must not think to excuse our selves so, from the Duty of Fasting, for the strengthning of our Supplications to God upon great and extraordinary Occasions.

Our Saviour, when he reproved the Hypocrisie of those that placed Religion in those outward shews that the *Pharisees* used in their *Fastings*; yet at the same time he gave Rules, how that Duty should be performed otherwise, *Matth.* VI. 16, 17, 18. And howsoever he exempted his Disciples from those Jewish Fasts, while he was with them, yet he declared, that when he was taken from them, they also should Fast, *Matth.* IX. 15.

And so we find in the example of his Blessed Apostle St. *Paul*, He reckons *Fastings* among the things which he endured, not only as a Christian, but as a Minister of God 2 *Cor.* VI. 5.

And again, *Chap.* XI. 27. He seems to value himself by it, that he was *in Fastings oft*, as a thing wherein he out-did other Men, even his fellow Apostles themselves.

But what? did he place Religion in this? No, at all, he used it only as an Instrument of Religion. He knew very well, for he Teaches us, That *Bodily Exercise profits little.* 1 *Tim.* IV. 8. But

it is a uſeful help to that which profits moſt of all; even to *Godlineſs* which is *Profitable to all things* as there it followeth.

And for Mourning, which is joyned with it in my Text, this alſo is neceſſary upon the account of Sin; otherwiſe we ſhould have no occaſion for it at all. The Angels that have no Sin, they have no occaſion of Mourning; nor ſhould we, if we could ſerve God on Earth (as we pray that we may,) as the Angels do in Heaven.

In ſhort, it is a Godly ſorrow that works Repentance, 2 *Cor.* VII. 9, 10. All other Sorrow, but for Sin, is good for nothing, but to break ones Heart, as it will, if one takes too much of it. *Worldly ſorrow worketh Death*, ſaith the Apoſtle.

But as he goes on, *Godly ſorrow works repentance, not to be repented of.* Godly Sorrow is our Mourning to God in my Text. To God, Mourning for ours and other Mens ſins againſt him: Lamenting, Abhorring, and Deteſting them. This works a Reſolution againſt them, which is the real beginning of Repentance. And this being followed, is a bleſſed amendment of Life.

In order to that, Faſting alſo is profitable, not ſo much for the Weakning of the Body, as for the Strengthning of the Soul.

Thoſe things which the Soul hath chiefly to ſtruggle with, are the Appetites and Luſts, and Affections, and Imaginations; All which are ſeated in the Body, and the Soul hath need of help for the ſubduing of theſe.

As

As to the Appetites, Faſting plainly doth the work. You will find it by this days experience, if you Faſt as you ought to do. You deny your Appetite what it would have. And denying it once, you will be the better able to deny it again. And the oftner you do this, the more you will be Maſter of your Appetites.

The Affections and Luſts are to be ſubdued in like Manner. It was the way that St. *Paul* gained the Government over himſelf. He was *in Faſtings oft* as I ſhewed you but now. And that way, *he kept under his Body and brought it in ſubjection*, as himſelf ſaith, 1 *Cor.* IX. 27.

By this Exerciſe of denying our ſelves, we alſo learn to reject all evil Fancies and Imaginations. They are moſt troubleſome things, if you hearken to them. There is no quiet, but by conſtant and ſtedfaſt rejecting them. For that indeed all theſe ſenſual Faculties are alike. It is only by feeding and humouring them, that we make them too ſtrong for us. There is no way to Maſter them, but by denying them what they would be at. Get the Victory over them and keep it; which is not to be done but by conſtant exerciſe; by ſuch exerciſe, which is all a kind of Faſting, and this Faſting is a Principal part of it; I ſay, by this means, get the Victory over them and keep it. By this you ſet the Rational Soul in its Dominion.

And that being enlightned by the Word of God; and

being assisted by his Grace, which Prayer, joyned with faithful endeavours, will certainly obtain; This will do the Work of God. The Soul will be Transformed into his Image: It will be like him in Righteousness and true Holiness.

O blessed affliction, whatever it be, that hath set us a Fasting and Mourning to so good a Purpose! O joyful Trial that hath had this effect, to purge out all our Dross, and to restore us to the Image of God! O happy Rod that hath Chastised us into our Duty, and made us so wise that we shall need it no more!

When we need it no more, we shall feel it no more. That is certain, in Gods way of dealing with Nations. For as the Jewish Church said in her Lamentations, *God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men.* All his Judgments upon Nations, when they are not to utter Destruction, they are designed to prevent it, if possible.

And therein he is so Gracious, That, if one Judgment will not do, he will send more, till they have their Effect, either to save them, or to fit them for Destruction; and then to make them Inexcusable.

This is certainly true of any Nation, which God hath taken into his particular Care; As he did *Israel* of Old, and as he hath done us at this Day.

He

He hath shewed his Care of us, by so many Instances, both of Mercy, and Judgment, and even in Judgment still remembring Mercy; that I do not doubt to exemplifie all that I have said, in the various Turns of Gods Providence over us of this Nation; beginning from that dreadful Stroke of God's hand, which hath occasioned our Meeting here together on this Day.

It was a dreadful Stroke indeed, the Cutting off of that excellent King, *of whom the World was not worthy.* I think no Encomium too good for him; but that is not so much my business at this Time.

I am now to Consider, whence this terrible Stroke came; and upon what Account it was given us, and how we have Profited by it since, after so many and many Fasts as we have kept on this occasion.

Whence it came? *Is there any evil in the Land, and the Lord hath not done it?* saith the Prophet? This evil was surely from the Lord. It was Gods Judgment upon this sinful Nation.

A dreadful Judgment it was, such as the Jewish Church bewailed in her Lamentations, *Lament.* IV. 20. Speaking I suppose of King *Zedekiah*, a King not to be named with Our's the same day. He was one that *did Evil in the sight of the Lord*; and yet he was their King, and see how they lamented the Loss of him. When he was

was fallen into his Enemies Hands, they lamented him in theſe words: *The Breath of our Noſtrils, the Anointed of the Lord, was taken in their Pits, of whom we ſaid, under his ſhadow we ſhall be ſafe.*

But when I ſpeak of the Judgments of God, which muſt be for the Sins of a Nation; we are firſt to conſider what thoſe Sins were, as well as we can do it at this diſtance of Time.

They are now ſo far out of remembrance, that I would not call them to mind; but that I think I am obliged to it at this time, by the Duty of my Place. For in vain do we Faſt and Mourn for this Judgment, without ſaying what the Occaſion of it hath been. I mean only what National Sins we are to Confeſs before God; and what we are to amend, if they yet continue amongſt us.

I cannot pretend to give a very particular Account of our National Sins at that time. Nor dare I take upon me to Charge the meritorious Cauſe of that Judgment upon this or that ſort of Men. Some indeed have been too laviſh that way, in declaiming againſt the Sins of the Court, and of the Governing part of this Nation; but they have done it with a wicked Deſign to blaſt the Memory of him that had the leaſt ſhare of them. I Beſeech God it may not be laid to their Charge.

But for the Sins of the Nation in General, I think it cannot be denied, they all ſprung from a Surfeit of

of the Blessings of God. Our Religion, our Liberties, and our Properties, were all in such a flourishing State, as made us the Envy of all other Nations round about us. And yet here at home, through the Practises of some Ambitious Men, every thing was then represented to the People quite contrary. They were even frighted out of their Wits, with false Cries of Tyranny and Popery. In a blind Belief whereof, Multitudes of the People run into Sects; and those inflamed them into a horrible Rebellion; which the rest of the Nation, the Generality of them, did but too tamely comply with. And they that, according to their Duty, opposed this, yet too many even of them, so far provoked God with their Sins; that he thought fit to punish the whole Nation, by depriving it of all those Blessings at once, in suffering that Excellent King to be Murthered, as upon this day.

I Charge it upon none at this time, but the Sins of the Nation; for it must be a National Sin, that bringeth down a National Judgment. And this Judgment was taken aright, by many devout People of the Church of *England* at that time: Who immediately humbled themselves under the afflicting hand of God; and kept a true Fast on this day, for many Years before there was any Law to Authorize it.

All which time, the Authors of this Cursed Fact, having then the Government in their hands; gave the

the whole Kingdom full occaſion to ſee, what a woful Change they had made.

But this muſt needs be ſaid, to do right to thoſe Uſurpers; that they ſeverely Corrected all Vices but thoſe that were chiefly their own. Eſpecially Drinking, Swearing, and Curſing, were puniſhed more ſeverely in thoſe Times, than at any time before in our Memory. Adultery, was one while made a Capital Crime; and though I think none ſuffered the Puniſhment, yet I muſt needs ſay, it was not then ſo much in Faſhion as it hath been ſince. Our Vices were then the more capable of being brought within Bounds, becauſe their Nurſe, Luxury, was ſo much diſabled, by the Havock and Spoil that the Wars had made upon moſt of the Great Eſtates in the Kingdom.

At laſt, when the Uſurpers came to divide among themſelves, that united all the reſt of the Nation. All Enmities ſeemed to be forgotten at that time.

The People being thus prepared for ſuch a Mercy, God heard the Prayers of his poor afflicted Ones, and eſpecially of them that had Faſted and Mourned in ſecret on this Day; and according to their Prayers, God wonderfully brought about the Reſtauration of the Royal Family; upon which, This Faſt was Enacted by Law; and now and ever ſince it hath been obſerved by the whole Nation.

It hath been ſo, now theſe Six and Thirty Years. But even, from the Beginning of that Time, might not God well ſay, *Was it to me, even to me?* That moſt Pious Learned Man, who was not the beſt Interpreter of Prophecies, yet was in this a true Prophet himſelf. Dr. *Hammond*, at his Death, which was juſt before the King's Reſtauration, profeſs'd, He was more afraid of the Ill Effects of that, than he was of any thing that had happened. He feared, that the Proſperous State of the Church, coming in ſo upon the ſudden, before Men were prepared to receive it, would do the Church more hurt than all its Perſecutions had done hitherto.

Sure enough, that ſudden Change ſo turned many Mens Heads, that they were, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, *like Men that Dream.* If they had been Awake, they would have acted wiſer than they did

And for the generality of the Nation, it was wonderful to ſee what an Alteration this made in them. The very Pomp of the King's coming in revived the Luxury of the Nation; which had been much Chaſtiſed and brought down in the Troubleſome Times. The Univerſal Joy of it, ſet all People to the Drinking of Healths, which before was grown quite out of Faſhion. The Corruption of Morals, in other kinds, more than I can Name, ſpread from the Court downwards into all Parts of the Nation. And thoſe Immoralities tainted even Religion it ſelf. Whereſoever they took, they diſpoſed Men, either to Atheiſm, or to Popery.

It was Popery indeed, that made its Advantage of all the other Horrible Things, and even of Atheiſm it ſelf; as it appeared, when Popery was come into the Government. Then, within a ſhort Time, a profeſt Atheiſt, was look'd upon as next to being a good Catholick. He that was but profligately Vicious, was thought to be in a fair way to it. And no Man was accounted throughly fit for publick Truſt, that would not do Things againſt his Conſcience.

This was ſo notorious, That it did even turn a great many Mens Stomachs againſt Popery. They loathed the groſs Immoralities which they ſaw were ſo fulſomly courted by it. Drinking and Swearing were in a manner yielded up to the Roman Catholicks. There was ſcarce any capital Crime that would not be pardoned to a Convert. The very Atheiſts, that had any ſence of Honour, were aſhamed to be thought of that Religion.

For our Religion, They that had no Zeal for it before, were even fond of it when they ſaw it going away. The *Diſſenters* themſelves, (all but thoſe that would have given up the 5th of *November* for the 30th of *January*, of them I have nothing to ſay;) but moſt of the reſt of them were ſo ready to join with us in the common Danger; that tho' they did not wholly unite with us, yet they differed from us Amicably.

Theſe

Theſe were fair Diſpoſitions for that Mercy which God had then for us in ſtore. And he ſhewed it ſoon after, when we were come to the utmoſt Neceſſity. *When he look'd, and ſaw there was none to help, then his own Arm brought Salvation to us.* It was the hand of God, that raiſed us up a Deliverer, to ſave us from the very brink of Deſtruction. God brought us two Plants united together, out of that Royal Oak, that was cut down upon this Day; and he covered a third of them under the hollow of his Hand, which otherwiſe had been certainly ſnatched away from us.

Now, upon ſuch a Deliverance as this was, we might have believed that God had accepted our Faſts. Now we might have hoped he would have turned them into Feſtivals; That he would have delivered us from all our Enemies at once.

And doubtleſs ſo he would, if we had Faſted to a National Reformation. There was nothing wanting but that.

There wanted nothing on God's Part. He ſhewed his Inclinations towards us, by thoſe wonderful Preſervations he hath given us. And that, not once or twice, but Year after Year. Such has been his continual Goodneſs towards us. But, ſuch is our unthankfulneſs to him; that we have grown not better, but worſe, upon all the great Things that he hath done for us.

Who would have thought, but that upon that Miraculous Revolution, and the Wonderful Preſervations he has given us ſince, we ſhould have been, if not altogether ſuch as he would have us, yet at leaſt much better than ever we had been before? Who would not have expected that we ſhould have mended upon it exceedingly? But alas! How far are we from that? Are we not now worſe than ever? Our Provocations higher than ever? Is not our Luxury more extravagant? Are not our Adulteries more Impudent? Our Drinking more Profligate? Our Swearing and Curſing more Bold? In all reſpects, Do we not behave our ſelves as if we had been Delivered for theſe Things? How can we expect, but that God ſhould now turn his Hand upon us? That he ſhould ſtrike us down lower, that he ſhould wound us deeper, than ever?

Alas! Did he not do it, in taking away our Bleſſed QUEEN from us? The Light of our Eyes, the Breath of our Noſtrils, the very Joy of our Hearts! I can ſay no more; I am Aſtoniſhed, as oft as I think of it. This! was a Blow at the Root.

This may convince us, we have not yet Faſted to God We have not, nor never ſhall, till there be a National Reformation. Nothing elſe will pleaſe God, nothing elſe can ſave us, but this.

Be Exhorted therefore in the Name of God, to ſet Heartily to this great and neceſſary Work, every one in his Place and Station. You that have none but your ſelves, have the leſs to do; but you

you that have others under you, have the more to anſwer for; eſpecially you whom God has advanced into the higheſt Rank; you that ſit in the great Council of the Nation; you, above all others, ought to conſider, that not only your Honour and Intereſt, but the whole Nation lies at Stake, to be ſaved or loſt by your Hands.

We have too much Reaſon to fear, from what you have heard. Yet, bleſſed be God, we are not without Hope, if we are not wanting to our ſelves.

God hath yet preſerved to us a Gracious KING, now after that heavy Stroak of his Hand, in taking our bleſſed QUEEN from us. God hath given Him a Heart to ſupply to us what we have loſt; ſo that in Him we have them both in great Meaſure.

We have alſo yet remaining to us, another undoubted Plant of the Royal Stock; from whom we have one Princely Shoot, and may yet hope for more, if our ſins do not hinder us of that great Bleſſing.

We have (through the Goodneſs of God) a fair Proſpect, toward a happy End of that horrible War that lies upon us. God hath taken off *Pharaoh*'s Chariot-Wheels, he drives but ſlowly to what he did. He has been, for ſome Years, wholly upon the Defenſive: And now, God be thanked, he thinks it his Intereſt to have Peace.

We have nothing elſe to fear, but only our Sins and our Diviſions. And our Diviſions are the Fruit of

of our Sins. Amend theſe, and truſt in God, he will do every thing elſe for you.

No one of us can do all; but let every one do his Part, in Reforming himſelf and his Family, and thoſe that are under him. If all others will do the ſame with you, the Work is done, for which we have Faſted all this while. The Church and Nation are Safe, and we are Happy.

But if others will not join with you in this Neceſſary Work, it is ſad to think what is like to follow. However, you ſhall not loſe your Labour, come what will, you ſhall find your Account by it. You ſhall, even in this Life, in ſuch Meaſures as God ſees beſt for you: And whatſoever you want here, it ſhall be made up to you, more abundantly, in Life Everlaſting.

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